

Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V): Access and Opportunities in Career and Technical Education (CTE)

By Jacque Hyatt and W. Drew Andrews

In 2018, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act reauthorized the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (2006). The law is often referred to as Perkins V, and we refer to it as Perkins V in this brief. This law provides formula funding to states, local education agencies, community and technical colleges, and other eligible entities to develop, coordinate, implement, or improve high quality career and technical programs of study that help students gain knowledge and technical and employability skills necessary for success in a chosen career. Perkins V also strengthens the connections between secondary and postsecondary education, increasing opportunities for students to access programs of study more seamlessly as they move from high school to postsecondary education.

INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Perkins V includes specific provisions that emphasize the importance of career and technical education (CTE) on improving postschool outcomes for students with disabilities. Perkins V designates people with disabilities as one of nine “special populations”. Key provisions related to “special populations” include:

- **Performance targets:** States must set annual performance targets that require the state agencies and subrecipients to “continually make meaningful progress toward improving the performance of all CTE students,” including students who are members of special populations, and identify gaps in performance between members of special populations and their peers.
- **Strategies for special populations:** To receive assistance under Perkins V, states must prepare a state plan that describes the state’s program strategies for special populations.
- **Set aside funding:** States are required to use 0.1 percent of their state leadership funds, or \$50,000 (whichever is less) for the recruitment of special populations, including students with disabilities, to enroll in CTE programs.
- **Needs assessment:** To receive Perkins V funds, subrecipients must conduct a comprehensive local needs assessment related to CTE at least every two years and include the results of the needs assessment in their local application for funds. The assessment must include an evaluation of the strategies implemented to overcome barriers that result in lower rates of access to, or performance gaps in, CTE courses and programs for special populations.
- **Equal access:** Subrecipients must describe how they will provide activities to prepare special populations for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations in competitive, integrated settings; provide equal access to CTE courses and programs of study to members of special populations; and ensure that members of special populations will not be discriminated against.
- **Out of pocket expenses:** Subrecipients may use their funds to reduce or eliminate out-of-pocket expenses for students who are members of special populations participating in CTE by supporting the costs associated with fees, transportation, childcare, or mobility supports for those special populations.

- **Professional development:** Subrecipients can use Perkins V funds for professional development for specialized instructional personnel, such as occupational and physical therapists, teachers, and instructors, and may include professional development on universal design for learning (UDL).

UDL is a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that:

- provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged
- reduces barriers in instruction;
- provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges;
- maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient. (HEOA, P.L. 110-315, §103(a)(24))

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

Perkins V includes specific provisions aimed at making CTE programs accessible to students with disabilities, including students with intellectual disability. By understanding the overall goals of Perkins V funding and specific provisions related to students with disabilities, Perkins V-funded initiatives can more effectively use eligible funds to support activities that benefit students with disabilities.

CTE has been proven to improve college and career readiness outcomes for all students, including students with intellectual disability (Theobald et al., 2019). To realize the full potential CTE offers, secondary and postsecondary education programs can use strategies shown to increase access and participation of students with disabilities across career pathways. Here are some strategies:

- Provide professional development opportunities to faculty and staff on UDL and how to implement appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities participating in CTE programs of study

- Share information with students and families about the benefits of participating in CTE programs and the available programs of study beginning in elementary grades through postsecondary education
- Use the increased connections between secondary and postsecondary CTE programs to create a seamless transition for students with disabilities to reach their desired postsecondary goals
- Engage high school career counselors in increasing students with disabilities' access to and participation in CTE
- Collaborate across agencies to create an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each agency in coordinating supports and services specific to students with disabilities' participation in CTE
- Create a process to share data across state and local agencies for program evaluation and improvement

Historically, students with intellectual disabilities have had limited involvement in CTE programs. The Higher Education Opportunity Act created Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) programs that provide students with intellectual disabilities opportunities to enroll in CTE programs. As new inclusive CTP programs are developed, the need for additional support and collaboration will increase too.

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RESOURCES

[Perkin's Collaborative Resource Network \(PCRN\)](#)

US Department of Education: Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, Division of Academic and Technical Education

[CAST Universal Design for Learning: CTE Focus](#)

CAST is a nonprofit education research and development organization that created the UDL framework and guidelines. They offer several resources focused on UDL in CTE.

[Association for Career and Technical Education \(ACTE\)](#)

ACTE is a professional organization that provides professional development, resources, and tools for CTE educators and others.

[The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative \(NTACT: C\)](#)

NTACT:C is co-funded by the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to provide information, tools, and supports to assist professionals in delivering effective services and instruction for secondary students and out of school youth with disabilities.

REFERENCES

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